

SPECIAL RECOGNITION CATEGORY DRAMA DIVISION

Woman

**CHARLES SHIRLEY
VA MEDICAL CENTER
TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA**

Eighty-five-year-old Charles Shirley recites poems and sings along to the familiar songs that were an important part of his youth. The words that Shirley is able to recite through these works provide an important link to his past. Diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Shirley, who resides at the VA Medical Center in Tuscaloosa, Ala., can tell things to others about himself through his singing, story telling and poem recitations.

One of Shirley's poems, entitled *Woman*, received first place in the Special Recognition category of the Drama division. With a little bit of coaxing, Charles Shirley will recite this whimsical poem, along with several others that he recalls from his childhood. When he does this, the positive social recognition he receives from his peers and from VA staff members brings him joy and a feeling of connection with others.